

Public Safety and Security Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7119

AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE FIRE PREVENTION CODE, STATE FIRE

Title: SAFETY CODE, STATE BUILDING CODE AND ELEVATOR INSPECTIONS.

Vote Date: 3/18/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/4/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Public Safety & Security Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The proposed legislation seeks to address a variety of concerns including routine elevator inspections, state fire code, and building codes. These changes were in response to concerns from a variety of different stakeholder groups. Updating and modifying building codes and fire safety codes when need be means the state keep its residents safety in mind always. When properties are up to code it reduces the accidental injuries and other crises that can arise. In addition to that there have been numerous reports about non-functional elevators that are not receiving appropriate maintenance which creates risk for residents and emergency personnel. The proposed legislation would address these concerns by ensuring routine elevator inspections are performed by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS).

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

There is a significant amount of substitute language included in the proposed language – changes are listed below:

- Section 3, 4, and 5 include minor grammatical changes and correct a few words in the language.
- Section 6 adds definition for the words address, dwelling unit, agent in charge, controlling participant, project-based housing provider, identifying information, nonresident owner, population.
- Section 9 changes 'Require' to 'Allow' and adds the phrase 'not more than' on Line 372.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Michele Gilman, Commissioner, Department of Administrative Services (DAS):

Commissioner Gilman offers general comments on a few provisions contained within this legislation:

DAS expresses concern that Sections 2-4 may cause confusion as it relates to the regulatory structure of fireworks, pyrotechnics, and rockets.

DAS expresses opposition to Section 5(c) – it believes that the authority to interpret the State Fire Prevention Code should solely be the responsibility of the State Fire Marshall. If these provisions proposed in this section are added, then the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) would have the authority to interpret them.

In response to Section 9, DAS hopes to discuss language changes to allow for the installation of smaller elevators in buildings six stories or less.

DAS requests additional staff "to develop and promulgate a model ordinance by July 1, 2026, that establishes more stringent energy-efficiency requirements for buildings or building projects" pursuant to Section 10 of this legislation.

In response to Section 11, DAS notes it lacks the staff at the agency to inspect elevators at least every twelve months, and that funding for new staff is not included in the governor's budget. Moreover, DAS acknowledges that it does not have "the mechanism to estimate the duration of an inoperable elevator", which is what Section 11 asks for.

Ronnell Higgins, Commissioner, Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection (DESPP), Opposes:

DESPP expresses concern with Sections 1-5 of the proposed legislation. They indicate appreciation for the intent behind the bill, but remain concerned about regulations being housed in one agency, Department of Administrative Services, when the jurisdiction of them would be under another agency, DESPP. They note the risk for 'jurisdictional ambiguity' under the proposed model. Furthermore, DESPP emphasizes their concerns with the composition of the proposed advisory committee - despite having exclusive jurisdiction over these regulations, FEIU would only have two seats on the committee leading to the potential of being outvoted in the event of a disagreement.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Sen. Martin Looney, State Senator & President Pro Tempore, 11th District, Supports:

Sen. Looney is testifying specifically in support of the provision included in this bill which mandates at least one elevator inspection every twelve months from a DAS inspector. Sen. Looney notes issues in his district relating to functional elevators. Specifically, he raises concerns about seniors with mobility issues, who would be unable to use the stairs if the elevator was to become non-functional.

Rep. Jason Rojas, House Majority Leader, Connecticut General Assembly, Supports:

Representative Rojas expresses his support for Section 9 of the proposed legislation. He notes that under current building codes, the installation of elevators in smaller apartment complexes is often onerous in its cost. The proposed legislation hopes to provide more flexibility to alleviate some of these burdens.

Eli Sabin, Legislative Coordinator, Connecticut Voices for Children, Supports:

Eli Sabin offers support for the proposed legislation, specifically Section 6, on behalf of the Connecticut Voices for Children (CT Voices). CT Voices acknowledges concerns regarding tenants breaking housing codes; despite these violations, these individuals are often not held accountable. CT Voices believes that provisions like the one which mandates all owners, except those that own one and two family homes, register with the Fire Marshall promotes accountability and allows for proper enforcement if these landlords do not fulfill their duties to tenants. Although CT Voices strongly supports the legislation, it proposes a couple amendments, which Eli Sabin lists in his testimony.

Walter Summers, Connecticut Fire Marshalls Association, Supports:

Walter Summers is submitting testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Fire Marshalls Association (CFMA) in support of the proposed legislation. CFMA has been concerned about fireworks regulations for a number of years – they note that the old regulations are antiquated and need to be revisited. CFMA prefers the regulations to be adopted into the State Fire Prevention Code.

Multiple testifiers note the necessity of properly functioning elevators to highlight his support of this bill. They contends that in emergency situations quick response times are paramount. If elevators are non-functional, this can cause delays in police or other emergency services response times, which amplifies potential public safety dangers.

The testifiers are listed below:

Christopher Alvarado, Sergeant, New Haven Police Department, Supports

Shakira Samuel, Assistant Chief, New Haven Fire Department, Supports

Multiple farming stakeholder groups listed below are testifying in support of the proposed legislation. These groups highlight the importance of hoop houses and high tunnels for farmers. Since these farmers are often operating on tight budgets, the regulatory clarity provided in this bill as it relates to these structures is much needed. Clear classification, as it relates to the permanence or lack thereof of these structures, also gives farmers the ability to advocate for property tax relief.

Ellie Angerame, New Connecticut Farmers Alliance (NCTFA), Supports:

Robert Chang, Echo Farm LLC, Supports

Eliza Paterson, Senior Policy Associate, American Farmland Trust, Supports

A few individuals offer support for the provision of this bill that permits stretch codes. These testifiers believe that these codes offer Connecticut the opportunity to continue being a leader in energy efficiency, and allow those municipalities who are more concerned about climate impacts the flexibility to enforce more environmentally conscious codes. The testifiers emphasize the success other states have had with

stretch codes - noting that these codes have led to positive results like lower utility bills and improved air quality.

[Rebecca S., Supports](#)

[Kai Starn, Supports](#)

[Katie Troy, Supports](#)

[Zachary Vergata, Supports](#)

Several individuals listed below testified in support of the provisions expressed in Section 11 of this legislation. Of primary concern for a couple of them is the ramifications non-functional elevators have on seniors with mobility issues. A non-functional elevator would restrict these seniors ability to leave their residences, which has numerous consequences. For example, a non-functional elevator could be the reason a senior misses an important doctor's appointment. All the testifiers fear that landlords are not held accountable by the current statutory provisions in place, and some have even uncovered anonymous complaints against landlords. These complaints are entered anonymously to avoid retaliation from indignant landlords.

[Sonia Alvarez, Supports](#)

[Kim Rose, Former Representative \(118th District\), Supports](#)

[Tomi Veale, Director of Elderly Services, City of New Haven, Supports](#)

Henry Murphy Sr.

[Daniel Coughlin, Assistant Chief, New Haven Fire Department](#)

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Susan Pronovost, Executive Director, CT Greenhouse Growers, Opposes:](#)

Mrs. Pronovost does not support section 9, subsection 2 due to the language to define high tunnels and hoop houses as temporary agricultural structures.

[Chris Valley, President-CT Nursery and Landscape Association, Opposes:](#)

Mr. Valley, opposes and says that section 9 line 248-249 which classifies hoop houses or high tunnels as temporary agricultural structures will require many members to disassemble each structure and have to rebuild them every six months. It will become a burden to the members overtime.

[Johhny Carrier, Vice President, Carrier Group Inc., Opposes:](#)

Mr. Carrier opposes section 10 of the bill. He request that the committee removes the section because it is imposing excessive requirements making construction unfeasible.

[Giuseppe Feola, Business Development Manager, Montagno Construction, Opposes:](#)

The testifier opposes the bill but more specifically section 10. States that the state is already in a housing crisis and this bill makes things worst. He says that stretch codes increase the cost of hew homes, slow down development, and give towns another tool to block much needed housing.

Multiple stakeholders listed below are testifying in strong opposition to Section 10 of the proposed legislation. Many of these developers have come to rely on Connecticut's uniform

building codes for consistency and clarity. If new regulations were to be adopted, many questions would arise – for example, aspects like how these codes would be enforced and how the appeal process works would become unclear. Moreover, these individuals are concerned about the use of 'stretch codes' to block affordable housing developments by making them administratively unfeasible. These restrictions could have a negative impact on Connecticut's affordable housing market.

[Alysha Gardner, Senior Policy Analyst, Partnership for Strong Communities, Opposes:](#)

[Randy Heckman, President, CT Building Officials, Opposes:](#)

[Jeffrey Miller, Senior Vice President, Larew Doyle Associates, Opposes](#)

[Kenneth Mita, Owner, Central CT Construction Management, Opposes](#)

[Chris Nelson, President, Nelson Construction Inc., Opposes](#)

[Francis Palasieski, Director of Government Affairs, Lumber Dealers Assn. of CT, Opposes](#)

[Jim Perras, CEO, Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Connecticut, Opposes](#)

[Douglas Porter, Woodstock Building Associates, Opposes](#)

[Lauren Tagliatela, Franklin Construction, Opposes](#)

[Tony Valenti, Newport Realty Group, LLC, Opposes](#)

[Robert Wiedenmann, Sunwood Development Corp, Owner, Opposes](#)

Reported by: Derrick Arnold

Date: 3/31/25